

other food having a masa dough as an ingredient. The general arrangement of the preferred masa handling system 10 will now be described. A commonly available commercial mixer 12 is located at the beginning of the production line. The mixer 12 has a pivoting door 14 which can rotate downward towards a masa 18 and feeds a generally continuous masa stream 20 through a nozzle 22. Two vertically opposed and aligned endless belt separator conveyors 24 and 26 have moving surfaces 28 and 30 which face each other. The longitudinal ends 32 and 34 of separator conveyors 24 and 26 are mounted adjacent to the nozzle 22. One of the two separator conveyors 24 is "L" shaped and has vertical section, or vertical portion, 36 and a horizontal section, or horizontal portion, 38 which terminates above [a] an intermediate masa hopper 40 that is in between two feed conveyors as shown in Fig. 1. The vertical section 34 of the "L" shaped separator conveyor 24 extends longitudinally below the longitudinal end of the other separator conveyor, thereby providing a moving surface opposite from the nozzle 22. A deflector plate 41 is mounted on the end of the other separator conveyor 26. The previously discussed separator conveyors 24 and 26 move the masa 18 to the [first] intermediate masa hopper 40. The [That] masa [18] hopper 40 must be supplied with masa 18 periodically.

Replace disregard the patentee's prior instructions in its Substitute Preliminary Amendment mailed on May 4, 2001, entered on May 7, 2001, and instead replace the paragraph beginning at column 6, line 9 with the following:

A selectively operable diverter gate, for periodically allowing resupply of the masa hopper 40, is located [adjacent to the end 44 of] in a gap between an upstream feed conveyor (the horizontal section 38 of the "L" shaped separator conveyor 24 as shown in Fig. 1) and a downstream feed conveyor 46. The diverter gate 42 is shown in its open gap position. However, when the diverter gate 42 is [closed] in a closed gap position, its top surface 45 forms a gravity slide that feeds to a horizontal downstream feed conveyor 46, which, in turn, feeds another masa hopper which, as shown Fig. 1, may be an end masa hopper 48. It will be understood that while two masa hoppers 40 and 48 are shown the masa handling system 10 can be adapted for use with any number of masa hoppers. Therefore, the invention is not limited by the number of masa hoppers.

In the Claims:

Please amend the following claims as shown in the appendix attached hereto in order to read as follows relative to the original patent specification:

38. (Amended) A method for feeding masa to a pair of aligned, opposed sheeter rollers, the sheeter rollers located adjacent to a masa hopper having an opening for receiving masa and a slot for dispensing masa, the masa hopper also having at least one shaft above the slot, each shaft having a projection, the method comprising the steps of:

placing the masa through the opening in the masa hopper;

feeding the masa to at least one shaft; and